

**The Bill Blackwood
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The Use of Mounted Patrol Units in Law Enforcement

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**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement with it's entering into the twenty-first century has developed many new tools through the advancement of technology. Some of these are palm sized computers, global positioning devices, and computer aided dispatching are just a few of these technological advances made to assist the law enforcement officer in their daily duties. It has also shown law enforcement a new type of policing style, called "community policing."

The idea of "community policing" calls for the local law enforcement agencies to work even closer with the communities that it polices. Though this is an older technology called the mounted patrol unit. It has a positive impact on the community and still provides for some of the basic needs of law enforcement as a whole. Police departments can still maintain a command presence and provide safety and security to the citizens that it services.

In the community, does a child or a citizen come over and pet a bike, a motor cycle, or a patrol car? The answer is no, but they could come over and pet a horse if they chose to do so. This gives the officer an opportunity to meet and speak with the children and to speak with their parents about their concerns.

To research this issue this paper takes a look at the more recent comeback of mounted patrol units. The research will be accomplished by a review of printed information in police journals and periodicals. There will also be a survey conducted of departments with full, part-time, and voluntary mounted patrol units. Interviews will also be conducted with officers in mounted patrol units. Through these information gathering techniques one can get a first hand and insightful look at the advantages and disadvantages to having mounted patrol units within their department.

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INTRODUCTION

There will be several aspects discussed in this paper to include advantages and a distinct disadvantage for a department if they were to utilize a mounted patrol unit. Currently the Galveston County Sheriff's Office does not have a full or part time mounted patrol unit. They do have certified volunteer mounted patrol units and civilian mounted posses. This type of unit goes back to the older concept of community policing, prior to the use of patrol vehicles, the invention of the good time radio, and air conditioning. There is nothing like the face to face interaction between an officer on his beat and the citizens that they are sworn to protect and serve. There are a wide variety of tasks that can be conducted by mounted patrol officers on many different levels that could not be conducted in a motor vehicle, on an all terrain vehicle, on a bicycle, or on foot.

The purpose of this research paper is to inquire into those advantages and the disadvantages and see how they weigh out against each other. This will include the benefits and determents, as well as the cost effectiveness within a department's budgetary constraints. What are the advantages of the use of a mounted patrol unit in law enforcement?

The intended method of inquiry for this research will be through the review of articles written in journals, periodicals, books, and other publications. There will also be a survey conducted of departmental administrators, officers, and of the mounted officers themselves. Another survey, of citizens of communities that have mounted officers and those citizens in communities that do not have mounted patrol units, to get their input. Finally, there will also be interviews with actual mounted patrol officers who have their own and possibly differing views of the use of mounted patrol units and how the units

actually work out in the field. Several personal testimonials from experienced mounted patrol officers will also be introduced into the research based on their expertise in the field of mounted patrol units.

The anticipated outcome of this research will be to show that the advantages actually do outweigh the disadvantage of not having the mounted patrol unit within a department. These advantages are not only to the department, but to the community and vice-versa. There will be hurdles to overcome and budgetary constraints to deal with, not only in the beginning, but in the future of the unit's existence.

With this research the intent will be to show, that mounted patrol units are found to be another effective tool for law enforcement use within a department in a wide variety of functions in the law enforcement world. Community relations and community policing can also be enhanced since there would be even more one on one or face to face interaction between the mounted officers and citizens in the community that they are assigned to patrol. The advantages of having the mounted unit will outweigh the disadvantages of not having one. A mounted patrol unit, trained, equipped, and used properly, can be a very useful untapped resource for a department in a wide variety of situations that they could be called into service for. Some of these situations will be discussed and evaluated in the research.

Mounted patrol units are worth their weight in gold when things go bad and the situation dictates their use in a law enforcement role. These units utilize methods of policing that were developed to effectively deter crime, and give the community a sense of wellbeing. (Conly, 1994) The techniques used by mounted patrol units have been tested over the ages and are tried and true under real world situations. The concept of mounted patrols, date back to the early days when horses were the most effective

means of travel and when mounted patrol was conducted by the United States Cavalry and the Texas Rangers to name a few. In riot and crowd control situations a well trained and deployed mounted unit can be one of a commander's most effective tool since a good mounted patrol officer can be as effective as five or more officers on the ground.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mounted patrol units are making a strong and welcomed comeback in the United States. Nationally, mounted patrol units remain popular with the general public and with the officers that ride the beat on horseback (Rinker, 1997). The advantages of keeping up a mounted patrol units popularity is its work with unruly crowds, in congested traffic areas, greater mobility, and are officer friendly as well as citizen friendly. The proper deployment of the unit is everything.

The Bow Street Police Department is thought to have had the first department with a formalized mounted patrol unit; this was in the London area in 1805. The officers in the mounted unit lived in the areas that they patrolled and wore distinctive uniforms and equipment while on patrol. Because the officers lived in the areas that they patrolled it was easier for them to be part of the community and to become part of that close knit family. The primary purpose even back then was to provide security for the safety of the community to deter thefts and robberies by highwaymen. With the overwhelming success of these units, in 1836 Sir Robert Peel incorporated these units into his unarmed police force. (Roth, 1998)

With the invention of the shopping mall you have created a virtual buffet for the criminal to eat out at. Mounted patrol officers working the parking areas can deter crime

and watch over crowds much better than an officer on foot (Carney, 1978). Officers on horseback are able to cross distances much quicker than that of those officers on foot and are able to keep a suspect in sight over much greater distances, since they are so much higher off the ground.

This has been a true fact in recent years, especially during the holiday season. In Texas City, Texas, at the Mall of the Mainland, two mounted patrol deputies, one with the Galveston County Sheriff's Office and the other with the Galveston County Constables Office Precinct #1, chased a shoplifter for almost a mile through high grass, across several fields, and a stretch of roadway before apprehending him. The newspaper called these deputies, "Grinch Busters". The citizens shopping at the mall made comment that they felt safer with just the mere presence of the officers working on horseback knowing that they were there to protect them.

Officers working on the ground tend to get lost in large crowds and are not as nearly visible at a scene. The mounted patrol officer with their horse are larger, stand higher and out by far without a doubt. The mounted patrol officer always catches the eye of the citizens and other officers working the same area of operation. Being as visible as they are helps to create that safe and secure environment that the citizens want and the police strive to provide for them. A mounted officer's elevated position is extremely important when it comes to congested areas, whether it is an area congested with people or with vehicles. The modern mounted rider can overlook these crowds and watch for and deter crime (Carney, 1978). Sergeant Carl Robacker of the Galveston County Sheriff's Office stated in an interview that the mounted patrol officer has been extremely effective in events in Galveston County, Texas, such as Mardi Gras, Beach Patrol, and Beach Party Weekend over the last eight years (Robacker, 2003).

You will never see a citizen ask to pet a patrol car, or a bicycle an officer is riding in or on, but they want to pet the horse. It is through these acts of community policing and community involvement that crime can be deterred and community trust can begin being built. Once this occurs, residents in a community can be caring and compassionate and they will pass on valuable information to the mounted patrol officers (Fairburn, 1989). Unlike officers utilizing other modes of transportation there is much more interaction between the officers and the residents of the community.

In many cities in Texas such as Houston, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio mounted patrol units have been found to be very effective in deterring and policing the downtown areas of their respective cities. The mounted patrol units are not like regular patrol units in the fact, that they do not answer regular calls for service. These specially trained units patrol the streets, parks, and tourist areas keeping them safe. While on patrol their duties are two fold, one is to enforce the laws such as traffic tickets, disturbances, loitering, and the sale and use of any illegal substances. The other duty is to the public to reassure and assist them and to give directions or just a helping hand. Mounted patrol officers seem to have a higher morale and are willing to work with the public in an effort to deter and stop crime as well as disorder problems in the community (Huey, 1995). In an interview with Officer Jeff Wyers of the Galveston Police Department, he stated that in the areas where they were able to get “community policing” grants for mounted patrol units in the City of Galveston the mounted patrol unit was utilized with a minimum of two riders and a maximum of six when they were able to get the riders. The areas covered were the Strand business district of old downtown and the low income housing areas where the riders were rotated through as were some of the bicycle patrols (Wyers, 2003).

Mounted units over the past fifteen years have been put to the test. Because of this testing sometimes under the worst of circumstances, the mounted units performances have been reviewed and critiqued by others. More standardized methods of training and standard operating procedures have been written after these critiques were done. There are several levels of training including basic, intermediate, advanced, and some specialized training courses. The training includes moving large and small crowds, basic marksmanship from horseback, handcuffing arrest techniques, and escorts to name just a few. The training is conducted and certified through a local training academy, by a certified instructor, and submitted to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer's Standards and Education in Austin, Texas.

Unlike other forms of patrol the mounted patrol horse requires little to no servicing, unlike patrol cars, motorcycles, or other patrol style motor vehicles. Horses do require a servicing in a sense by annual veterinary visits and horse shoeing and trimming. Horses require annual shots, boosters, and blood tests for coggins and worms that are administered by a licensed veterinarian. Although, not the same type of insurance as patrol cars and motorcycles, a horse can also be insured for sickness, injuries, and liability insurance.

With the current trends in law enforcement and budgetary constraints, mounted patrol units can become extinct even though they are so successful in so many different areas. There are draw backs to being in a mounted patrol though, and these are the weather conditions, lack of technological assistance, and speed over extended distances. These same conditions are adherent for motorcycles, except for the speed over long distances. Patrol cars are equipped for protection against the elements, hot

and cold, and usually have additional technology such as global positioning devices and mobile data terminals for rapid access to information.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research paper is to inquire into those advantages and the disadvantages and see how they weigh out against each other for the use of mounted patrol units in law enforcement. First, review at a few of the advantages, such as in the areas of community policing, in mobility in crowded and crowd control situations, and in the arena of search and rescue will be done. Then a review of some of the disadvantages such as the overall cost for the department will be delivered. All of these factors need to be considered before a decision can be made about keeping or organizing a mounted patrol unit.

The expected overall outcome of this research paper will hopefully be a positive and informational one. It will also confirm that a departments mounted patrol unit if they do have one already in place, can be a very valuable asset for deployment in riot or crowd control situations. The research will also show that in the area of “community policing”, that a mounted patrol unit’s involvement with the community will enhance the overall relationship between the department and the areas of the city or county that they patrol. In the advantages category there is search and rescue capabilities where you would normally be unable to get a patrol vehicle or maybe even an all terrain vehicle into. A mounted patrol horse will also be less harsh on the environment than any other form of transportation available for ground searches. The disadvantages to having a mounted patrol unit are the overall cost to an agency in equipment, salaries, and training. To summarize, the research will show that the advantages listed above are

very significant in the arena of law enforcement and that they will outweigh any disadvantages in the long run.

In the research process of this project several visits to the library and multiple periodicals and police journals as well as printed stories were reviewed. In addition, there were surveys passed out, as well as interviews conducted not only in person, but on the telephone. The officers interviewed are local mounted patrol officers from various assignments and a variety of agencies. The surveys were conducted of fellow Law Enforcement Management students in Module I Class # 53, local area law enforcement agencies in Galveston County, and some of the local citizens in Galveston County. (see appendix 1 and 2) The surveys were filled out on the spot and returned for analysis and comparison.

FINDINGS

Horses have been an important part of the entire world. This is from the olden times, when people captured and broke them for domestication, to their current trained state in present time. Horses are some of the finest animals and will probably never be outdone by any other domesticated animal with the exception of possibly a dog. The bonds set by a horse and their riders are almost unbreakable and their loyalty rivals that of a dog.

It was not just in the United States that horses were first used in the field of law enforcement. They were also used for law enforcement in Australia, England, and in the European areas. In Australia they were first used to keep a watchful eye on prisoners of the penal colonies and to work in the fields. London's Bow Street police officers, in

England, used horses to patrol their streets as law enforcement officers to give the citizens a sense of security and to deter crime in the community.

In the United States they were used for transportation and patrol. During the American Revolution the red coats, at that time enforcing the King of England's laws rode horses from town to town enforcing laws and passing along information. The Texas Rangers, who were Texas's first real law enforcement agency, rode around Texas and Mexico enforcing the law, deterring crime, and thwarting bandits who crossed the border from Mexico into Texas and back. Those great distances were patrolled on horseback and very efficiently for that date and time. It was from these stories of the success about the use of mounted patrol horses in law enforcement came from. The first issue to be discussed in the advantages will be from the community policing aspect.

Throughout the research many comments were made that "community policing" was a high priority on most police departments to do lists. This was accomplished by the use of mounted patrol units in these areas, where there was little or no information being passed along to police. Then after awhile, information began to be passed from citizens where the mounted officers patrolled, to the mounted patrol officers and even further. With this new found interaction between police and citizens, a fence was being mended between the police department and the community it policed. Another advantage is a horse's mobility in a crowd situation.

The research confirmed that mounted patrol horses when deployed properly were able to gain access to areas that vehicular and foot officers were unable too. By the horses shear mass and size the unyielding sea of bodies seem to part as the mounted patrol officers approached in formation and blowing the whistles to announce their

arrival and intention to proceed forward. Also, in this sea of bodies a mounted officer was able to gain a perch from atop his horse with greater visibility of the area and the ability to watch people from greater distances. The last and least known area of work for mounted patrol units is in the arena of search and rescue.

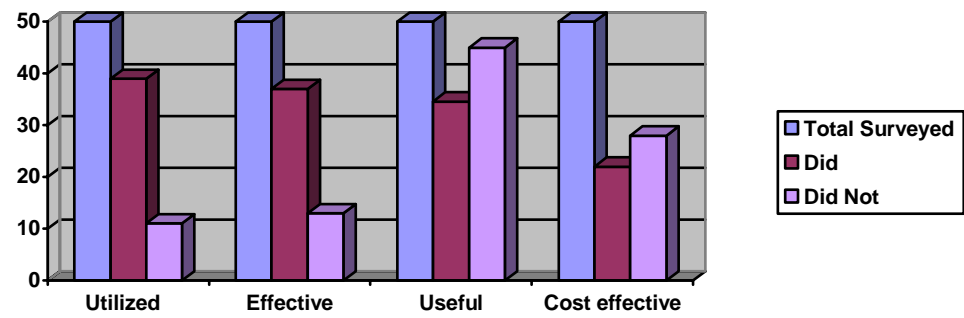
Search and rescue has been an endeavor made for mounted patrol units in rural areas. Mounted patrol units are used in the case of escaped prisoners, lost children and adults, and for the recovery of evidence. Their use is in areas where great distances need to be searched and elevated visibility is needed. The use of the mounted patrol units, are also more environmentally safe than using four wheelers or any other types of all terrain vehicles. Horses also do not need refueling out in the search area as do motor vehicles. It is interesting to look at the advantages, but we must also look at a disadvantage also.

This disadvantage, and it seems to be a really big disadvantage, is the cost to the department. It is a costly endeavor to start up and to maintain an efficiently trained and equipped mounted unit. The cost in these budget restrictive times weighs heavy on the paper when it comes to funding such units. A minimum number of officers assigned to a mounted patrol unit are two officers. This means that from the start their will be two officers salaries and benefits to look at. The cost of a good horse is approximately two thousand dollars before training. With only the basic amount of training, the cost will be approximately fifteen hundred dollars per rider and horse. The purchase of equipment that will belong to the department will run approximately one thousand dollars per rider. Last but not least, the annual feed, stabling, and ferrier bill will be approximately twelve hundred dollars per horse. These estimates were gathered from interviews with officers

in departments with mounted patrol units. Included with the findings are two surveys that were conducted during the process of this research.

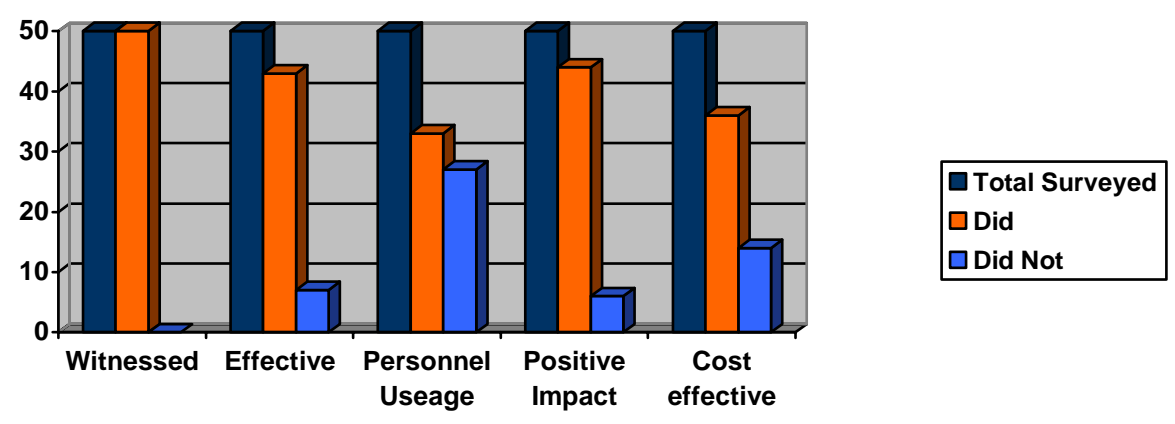
There were two types of surveys conducted to assist in the research of this project, one was for officers and departments and the other was for citizens in rural and metropolitan areas. These surveys were directed as a general request for information into their knowledge of mounted patrols. These surveys were ones done to determine the level of interest and the feelings of not only the community, but of the officers within a department and the department itself. The first survey that will be discussed is the survey conducted with fellow law enforcement officers and departments.

This survey was conducted by allowing officers from a variety of law enforcement departments to participate no matter the size, no matter the location, and regardless of whether they currently have or have ever had a mounted patrol unit in their respective department. There were a total of fifty officers from thirty-eight separate law enforcement agencies included in the survey. Only seven agencies represented had full time mounted patrol units. Eleven had volunteer units, and not one had part time units. But of the fifty officers surveyed thirty-nine had worked with mounted patrol units in the past and of those, thirty-seven thought that they were effective and very useful. On the other side of this though, of the fifty officers surveyed only twenty-two felt that they would be cost effective to operate in a law enforcement setting. The survey results are listed below in the following graph from the officer and department survey.



A second survey was also conducted of citizens in Galveston County communities.

This second survey concentrates on the citizens perceptions of mounted patrol units in several Galveston County communities. There again a total of fifty citizens from twelve cities and the unincorporated areas in Galveston County were surveyed. All fifty people interviewed had at one time or another witnessed a mounted patrol at work, but of those fifty only forty-three felt that they were effective, and only thirty-three people felt that they were an efficient use of police personnel. Although thirty-six thought that mounted patrol could be cost effective to a department, a whopping forty-four thought that they could have positive impacts to their communities.



CONCLUSION

This research paper investigated several parts of two key issues involving the use of mounted patrol units in modern day law enforcement. The question was what were the advantages and disadvantages to using a mounted patrol unit in law enforcement. The belief is that the advantages in the areas of community policing, mobility in crowded and crowd control situations, and in the arena of search and rescue would outweigh the disadvantages. At the opposite end of the spectrum, was the disadvantage of budgetary constraints to a department to fund or continue funding a mounted patrol. A department's priorities are not in the area of mounted law enforcement.

The advantages in the area of community policing are very interesting. Mounted patrol units seem to be able to get lines of communication started faster than any other form of patrol. Mounted patrols have become part of the community and as fear and distrust of the police disappears then communication starts. The interaction between children and parents with mounted officers is outstanding.

Throughout the research it appeared that all departments had some sort of budgetary constraints or were asked to cut their budgets. For the most part the first line item to go was the line item for mounted patrol units. There were many mounted patrol units that operated primarily on grants, and after the grants were depleted the program would be eliminated. The officers in those positions were reassigned to other divisions.

In all of the interviews conducted monetary compensation and funding always seemed to come up. Even in departments that at one time had full time mounted patrol units funding was the major issue. It did not matter how good the program was going or

how much the citizens liked the mounted patrol, it always came down to money and where it was going to be allocated too.

The surveys were interesting in the fact that most officers as well as the citizens liked the mounted patrol units. The officers like them because it gave officers a distinct advantage in most situations. The citizens like to see the mounted officers, and with their mere presence, it gave them an additional sense of safety and security.

With all the positives found in the research and in the interviews it always comes down to the all mighty dollar. Good programs get expunged or go extinct to make room for some other project or to make the reduction in the budget. The return on such a program could be outstanding; alas it is not always seen in that light.

Further research into this issue should be conducted. Realize though that a mounted patrol unit is not for every department, but it could be a valuable asset if used properly. Research particularly in to the area of "community policing" should continue to be explored. Also in the area of part time mounted patrol units. These mounted patrol units could be of great value also for working in parks, the beach, and special events such as ones where there would be large crowds and a lot of traffic problems where mobility could become an issue for patrol vehicles or even motorcycles.

This research was for the benefit of any and all departments interested in mounted patrol units because they do work, although they are costly. Each individual department would have to weigh out their options to having one or not. There are several questions that should be asked. Will it benefit the department and the citizens? How much is the department willing to spend? If this project works can it be continued in the long term? Only administrators and individuals with a vision can answer those questions.

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Appendixes

1 - Mounted Patrol: Officers and Departments Survey

2 - Mounted Patrol: Citizens Survey

Mounted Patrol Survey

Officer and Departments

Circle the Answer

Size of Department (Sworn Officers):

0 – 25 26 – 100 100 – 200 Over – 200

Type of area that is patrolled? Rural Urban Both

Do you have mounted patrol officers? Yes No

If you have mounted patrol officers are they?

Full time Part time Volunteer N/A

How many mounted patrol officers does your agency have?

0 – 4 5 – 10 11 – 20 Over – 21 N/A

Have you ever utilized a mounted patrol? Yes No

If you have mounted officers are they effective? Yes No

If you do not have mounted officers do you think they would be useful? Yes No

Do you believe that mounted patrols are cost effective? Yes No

Are you currently or have you ever been a mounted patrol officer? Yes No

Mounted Patrol

Citizens Survey

Circle the Answer

What is the size of your City?

Less than 10,000 10,001 – 50,000 50,001 – 100, 000 More than 100,000

Is your city or county? Rural Urban Both

Does your city or county have a mounted patrol? Yes No

If you do have a mounted patrol is it?

Full time Part time Voluntary N/A

Have you ever witnessed a mounted patrol at work? Yes No

Do you think that mounted patrols are effective? Yes No

Do you think that mounted patrols are efficient use of police personnel? Yes No

Do you think that mounted patrol could have positive impacts on your community, its citizens,
and your police or sheriff's department? Yes No

Do you as a tax payer think mounted patrol could be cost effective? Yes No